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1917

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WAR POEMS



WENDELL PHILLIPS STAFFORD

WAR POEMS

BY

WENDELL PHILLIPS STAFFORD

THESE POEMS, OF TIMELY INTEREST AS AMERICA IS ENTER-
ING THE GREAT WAR FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY, ARE
PUBLISHED AND SOLD, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE RED
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FEB 17 1941

MY COUNTRY

MY country! my country! my country!
They say thou art craven and weak;
Thou wilt leave the brave sword in thy scabbard,
And turn to the smiter thy cheek;
Thou wilt count the bright coin in thy coffer,
Thou wilt garner the gold of thy grain,
Thou wilt look on the death of thy children
Untouched by the wrong or the pain!

My country! my country! my country!
They say thou art willing to stand
And see the last battle of freedom
Lost, lost for the lack of thy hand!
Thou wilt hear the far roll of the cannon,
Thou wilt see the dim smoke and the stain,
Thou wilt gird up thy star-robcs about thee,
And turn to thy traffic again.

My country! my country! my country!
They lie that will say of thee so!
The stars that have led thee shall lead thee—
The hours of His Judgment they know!
Thy feet will be swift on His pathway,
Though the grapes of His wrath should be red;
Thou wilt leap to His trumpet, my country,
With the might of thy quick and thy dead!

My country! my country! my country!
There is never a leaf that will fade,
There is never a flower that will wither,
In the garland thy fingers will braid!
Their praise will be blown from the mountain,
Their song will be sung by the sea!
Immortal, immortal, my country,
The sons that shall perish for thee!

September, 1915

PAX NOBISCUM!

IN the hourglass of justice how slowly the sand of
her patience has run!

Now the last little grain has gone down and she stands
with her sword in the sun.

She has said to the lie and the murder that prowl in the
paths of the sea,

"If you meet with the least of my children, doubt not
you are meeting with me."

She has put on her robe for the battle, the star-flashing
blue of the night,

The red that, alas! will be redder and the white that
shall still be as white.

She has heard from her far-off Sierras her war bird's
re-echoing scream

O'er the mighty Amen of her prairies. . . . I woke, it
was only a dream.

New York Tribune, March, 1917

AMERICA RESURGENT

SHE is risen from the dead!
Loose the tongue and lift the head;
Let the sons of light rejoice!
She has heard the challenge clear;
She has answered, "I am here";
She has made the stainless choice.

Bound with iron and with gold,
But her limbs they could not hold
When the word of words was spoken:
Freedom calls—
The prison walls
Tumble, and the bolts are broken!

Hail her! she is ours again—
Hope and heart of harassed men
And the tyrants' doom and terror.
Send abroad the old alarms;
Call to arms, to arms, to arms
Hands of doubt and feet of error!

Cheer her! she is free at last,
With her back upon the past,
With her feet upon the bars.
Hosts of freedom sorely prest,
Lo, a light is in the west
And a helmet full of stars!

Washington Star, April, 1917

AMERICA TO HER ALLIES

FREE lands beyond the water,
To you a song I send,—
A song to men from the lover of men,
To friends the faith of a friend.

Hail now to Holy Russia!
Holy in more than name,
Holy as man is holy
And she has owned his claim.

Hail, beautiful Italia,
The spirit's clime and home!
Glory above the Cæsars' fall
On free, fraternal Rome!

Hail, France, whose bloody travail
Has brought again to birth
The soul that made the Marseillaise
The trumpet of the earth!

Take blood for blood, O gallant France,—
Full measure for our debt!
Reap, till the golden bins run o'er,
The sowing of Fayette!

Hail the stout hearts of Flanders
That to their sand-dunes cling!
And hail to him, on his realm's last rim,
The king who is a king!

Hail to the starry banner
Above Westminster walls,
And her anthem, rolled with the prayers of old
Through the arches of St. Paul's!

The candles on the altar
With a brighter flame shall burn
As the hearts of the sundered millions
To the ancient ties return.

Fight on, free lands, for freedom!
Freedom's in every blow.
The freedom we bear they too will share
Against whose gates we go.

For the crowned and cruel liar
In the sun there is no room;
And our hands are charged with thunder,
And our feet are shod with doom.

New York Tribune, April 29, 1917

AMERICAN BATTLE HYMN

1917

Tune, Maryland

AMERICA, America,
My sweetheart land America!
To thee they cry who sink with wrong;
For thee they faint who battle long;
Put on thy strength, O thou most strong,
America, America!

America, America,
My sweetheart land America!
Beneath the battle's swelling girth
The future struggles to its birth—
The liberty of all the earth,
America, America!

America, America,
My sweetheart land America!
Wilt thou not hear, wilt thou not wake?
The sword of all thy battles take,
And thy star-streaming banner shake,
America, America!

America, America,
My sweetheart land America!
Go on, go on to victory!
The stars have made their plight with thee;
Thy dead will rise and fight with thee,
America, America!

THE UPRISING

WE are coming, we are coming,
Hear the world-wide host assemble.
We are coming, we are coming,
Let the damnèd despots tremble.
We are coming, we are coming,
Let them make the shackles faster;
We are coming, we are coming,
We that have no slave or master.
We are coming, we are coming,
Blood must buy the future's blessing;
All the wrongs of all the ages
Stride with us to their redressing.
We are coming, we are coming,
'Tis the day of signs and wonders,
In our hands the leashed lightnings,
At our feet the fawning thunders.
We the people, we the people,
We the humble and the human,
We are coming, we are coming,
Ye that torture child and woman,
Ye that give to death the guiltless,
Ye that shuffle truth and treason,
Ye whose fingers foul the holies,
Ye that triumph for a season,
We are coming, we are coming,
And the tender skies upbraid us
Till we sweep ye in the furnace
Of the hell that ye have made us.
We are coming, we are coming,
We are coming, we are coming. . . .

Washington Post, June 30, 1917

PASSING MOUNT VERNON

THE slowing speed—the ship-bell's toll—
The plain white porch outstanding clearly—
The sloping lawn—the wooded knoll
Within whose shade he lies austere—

So on we pass. How peacefully
The Pater Patriæ reposes,
With fresh returns of fleur-de-lis
And tribute late of British roses!

Today his Roman mask must wear
A smile that might be called complacent:
England and France, a loving pair,
Before his modest tomb obeisant!

But still he sleeps, unroused by wrong,
Unmoved amid a world's commotion,
While his old river glides along
To where his war birds breast the ocean.

Yet is it true to say he sleeps?
For still his ghost, august and splendid,
Its march around our border keeps;
And by his faith are we defended.

To us his voice is speaking clear,
And sounds across the seas in thunder;
And 'tis the hand that crumbles here
Which yet shall cleave the thrones asunder.

Washington Post, July 12, 1917

SIGNUM SALUTAMUS

GLORY, old glory, dear flag of our fathers,
Emblem of all we would leave to our sons,
Lifting the sign of thy true constellation
Where the mad trail of the meteor runs,
Holding the light of the stars in their stillness
Over the fury and flare of the guns!

Glory, old glory, fly on with thy message!
Thine is the language the slave understands.
Children will kneel to thee, mothers will bless thee,
Maidens will meet thee with flowers in their hands.
There will be fear in the tents of the tyrants:
There will be joy in the desolate lands.

Glory, old glory, how white is thy vesture—
White as the snow till it touches the sod!
Glory, old glory, how red is thy raiment,
Even as His who the winepress hath trod!
Glory, old glory, how blue is thy buckler,
Blazoned with fires of the splendor of God!

Glory, old glory, thy warp in its weaving
Was woofed with the dreams of a day that will be.
Glory, old glory, the gale in thy halyards
Is humming the song of a world that is free.
All we have lived for and all we will die for,
Glory, old glory, go onward with thee!

WHO IS THIS?

W*HO is this that comes from Edom with his garments glory-dyed,
With the lamb upon his shoulder and the lion in his stride?*

'Tis the Son of Man returning, who of old was crucified.

Wherefore stained is thine apparel, and thy raiment splashed with red?

I have sprinkled all my raiment from the feet unto the head.

'Tis the day of my redemption. 'Tis the blood that I have shed.

When I looked there was no helper, none beside me to uphold.

Then my own arm brought salvation, and my fury made me bold,

And I trod them in my anger—in the dust their pride is rolled.

Thou—but thou art meek and lowly, and thyself thou couldst not save.

Suffering and not avenging, thou hast taught us to be brave.

Lord, in love, and not in anger, thou didst burst the guarded grave.

Ye were overcharged with surfeit; ye were drunk with
other care;
And the day whereof I warned you came upon you
unaware:
Like a partridge in the cover, earth is caught within
the snare.

There shall be distress of nations till your sins have
reached the sum,
Till the lofty looks are humbled and the thunder-mouths
are dumb.
It was in the cloud, I promised, that the Son of Man
should come.

They that draw the sword against me, they shall perish
by the sword:
I will turn and overturn them till their sceptre is
abhorred:
Ye shall look and shall not find them—God alone shall
be the Lord.

Have ye heard the children crying? Have ye reckoned
up the score?
Have ye counted off the ages till the wrong shall be no
more?
I saw Satan fall like lightning—heard the heavens
behind him roar.

It is I, as by the signals of my coming ye should know:
He hath set on high the humble and hath brought the
mighty low.
Ye have heard the word of Mary. Even so. It shall
be so.

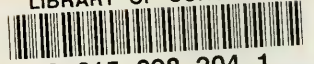
INVOCATION

O THOU whose equal purpose runs
In drops of rain or streams of suns,
And with a soft compulsion rolls
The green earth on her snowy poles;
O Thou who keepest in the ken
The times of flowers, the dooms of men,
Stretch out a mighty wing above—
Be tender to the land we love!

If all the huddlers from the storm
Have found her hearthstone wide and warm;
If she has made men free and glad,
Sharing, with all, the good she had;
If she has blown the very dust
From her bright balance to be just,
Oh, spread a mighty wing above—
Be tender to the land we love!

When in the dark eternal tower
The star-clock strikes her trial hour,
And for her help no more avail
Her sea-blue shield, her mountain mail,
But sweeping wide, from Gulf to Lakes,
The battle on her forehead breaks,
Throw Thou a thunderous wing above—
Be lightning for the land we love!

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